

Remembering Yesterday: a poem by John Killick written for our June 2014 Symposium

1

Put your ear to the wall ---

what do you hear?

is it the mice scurrying

behind the wainscot?

Is it the Home's timbers

settling for second-best?

Is it the shades of those

who inhabited these rooms?

No, it is none of these.

It is the living, breathing cries

of the too-long denied;

the all-too-human tears

of those confined in wheel-chairs;

the ostracised; the already

deemed to have died.

Unlock, unlatch doors, windows,

let the world's sights, sounds,

the fresh air of ordinariness pour in

transforming lack into excess.

Let memories abound,

let laughter resound ---

and a new age of honouring begin

2

At first hesitant, like a bather
on the brink, or an unbeliever

at the churchdoor, Madge casts around
for a means of escape. Then the sound

of a welcoming voice “Come and play.
We’re all taking a line for a walk today.”

Miss Haggerty holds her hand, helps her negotiate
her route to a chair where the paper awaits.

Now the pencil moves, and the past is flocking
onto the page. It is Art that does the unlocking

3

Listen to those chords. Hear that tune ---
where have you heard them before?

Start to sing. Bring the time and the place
and the person back to mind.

It’s not just appealing, it’s the feeling
that clings, brings back the taste

and the smell, the whole experience
etched on the template of the self.

If music be the food let's gorge on it,
make it the sound-surround of our lives.

4

Alice, Eddie, Sally, Wallace, Janet, Joe,
Maurice, Phoebe, Polly, Mac, Mike and Doris ---
they are dancing. It is not old-time;
it is not modern expressive; it is not
any style you could call by a name.
It is slow. It gives space for the personal:
their own movement, their own gestures,
they inhabit their own moments.
The music supports them, transports them
into the stories of their own lives.

When it stops they listen to the recording.
They cannot stop exclaiming at it.
It helps them recognise who they were and are.

5

We used to hold them back, made them
hide in the anterooms of our neglect.

Now we gently ease them forward
to stand in the circle of our concern.



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Sometime soon we shall abandon special measures,
and allow each to find their own space

to occupy the everywhere of our mutual regard.